

Adoptions
with Love

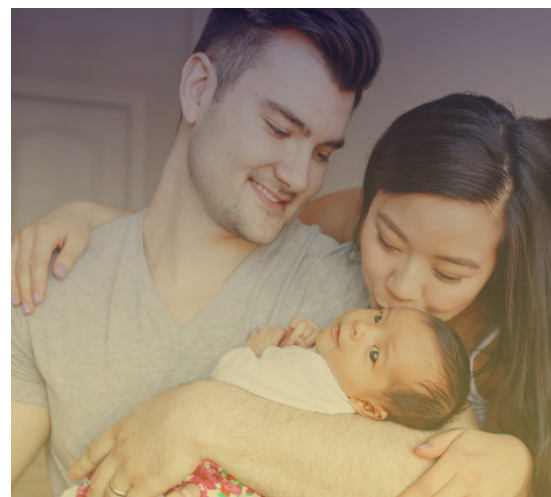


Massachusetts
Adoptive Family FAQ

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Adopting in Massachusetts

In this guide, you will learn about the adoption requirements, costs, and application process in Massachusetts.



Introduction

Adoption is an incredible act of love. It helps singles, couples, and other people that are hoping to fulfill their dreams of becoming parents. Thanks to adoption, families are formed and children can enjoy wonderful lives, full of love, security, and opportunity.

If you are living in Massachusetts, you may have many questions about the state's adoption process, like: Who can adopt? How much does it cost? How do I apply? These are all great (and necessary) questions to ask before taking the leap into adoption. We are here to guide you.

Whether you have struggled with infertility, have always dreamed of adopting, or already have children but wish to complete your family through adoption, you have come to the right place. Adoptions With Love is a private, non-profit, full-service and licensed adoption agency in Massachusetts. For over 34 years, we have worked with hopeful adoptive parents across the Bay State – all of whom started right where you are now: asking questions.

In this eBook, we will answer some of the most frequently asked questions regarding adoption in Massachusetts for prospective adoptive families. We will walk you through the application process, adoption laws, home study requirements, and your adoption plan options in Massachusetts. Most of all, we will provide you with the answers you need to start your own adoption journey.



Adoption is Positive

Adoption is an incredible way to grow your family. In Massachusetts, we welcome single parents and couples of all make-ups to adopt.

How much does it cost to adopt in MA?



The cost of adopting a child varies by adoption agency. Some agencies offer a flat rate for their adoption services, while others have a varying pricing model depending on the services needed. At many agencies today, the cost of adoption is non-refundable – even if an adoption falls through. Therefore, it is important to inquire about the agency's costs and commitment to finalizing your adoption, before getting started.

You may be wondering, what are you paying for when you adopt a baby? This is an important question for prospective parents to ask. The cost of adoption covers many of the necessary services that expectant/birth mothers require during their pregnancy and immediately following, such as counseling, legal assistance, prenatal and postpartum appointments and, of course, the birth itself.

The adoption fees also cover the cost of services for the adoptive parents, such as:

- The home study
- Processing of clearances and FBI background checks
- Agency assistance in creating and building an adoptive parent profile (including photo albums and letters to share with expectant/birth parents)
- Legal support and ICPC-associated costs
- Finalization of adoption in court
- Post-placement services, such as counseling, open adoption facilitation, or search and reunion services for adoptees

Adoptions With Love offers prospective adoptive families one flat fee for their adoption. This fee is guaranteed. It covers the costs needed to take care of their baby's birth mother, before taking baby home. Should a birth mother change her mind, the adoption fee will not be deposited and returned to the family.

With Adoptions With Love, prospective parents can rest assured that their adoption is in good hands, and that the fees will go toward their adoption, no matter when the adoption takes place. We are committed to working with you until you have your baby.

Adoptions With Love is a full-service adoption agency, meaning everything is covered under one cost, and there are no surprise fees that pop up later in the process.

What do adoption agencies look for in families?

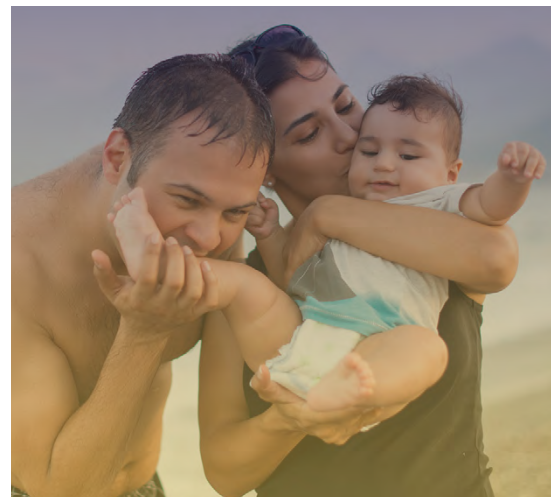


If you are thinking of adopting a baby in Massachusetts, you may be wondering what agencies are looking for in their families. What are the standards or requirements that adoptive families must meet? Are there expectations, in terms of income or health? How about family background or make-up? These are all normal questions to ask.

As an agency, we recognize that adoptive families come in all shapes and sizes. There is no “perfect family,” just as there are no perfect people! You do not have to have a doctor and a lawyer in the house, like the Huxtables. There is no expectation of families to have a two-parent household, an above-average income, or a large house with a white picket fence.

Adoption agencies are looking for good people who can offer a safe, stable, and loving home for a child. Of course, finances and criminal background checks are all standard in the home study process. This is to ensure you have a steady income to support a growing family and that you are a safe and responsible person.

Adoptions With Love is a caring adoption agency that, since 1986, has been matching adoptive families with expectant/birth parents and children. We are looking for kind, stable, and dependable people who are ready and excited to love and care for a child. During the home study, personality and passions will be explored. Family dynamics will also be assessed. This is to understand your personal family background and why you want to adopt a child.



Adoption Requirements

In Massachusetts, you must be at least 18 years of age to adopt. You must complete the home study to be approved for adoption.



Who can adopt in Massachusetts?



If you are a prospective adoptive parent in Massachusetts, you may be wondering who exactly can bring a baby home. Do you have to be a certain age? Do you have to be married? What are the qualifications?

Anyone looking to adopt in Massachusetts must be at least 18 years old and a resident of the state. Marital status does not matter in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – both singles and married couples may adopt. If you are not married, however, you must petition to adopt jointly with your partner.

There are no specific laws in Massachusetts regarding same-sex couples and adoption, which means all couples, regardless of sexual preference, may adopt a child. Private adoption agencies may have their own set of requirements. Adoptions With Love welcomes members of the LGBTQIA+ community to adopt. Adoptions With Love does require that a couple adopting together be legally married.

Anyone hoping to adopt within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts must complete a series of background checks as part of the home study. This includes FBI fingerprint clearances, local criminal background checks, sexual offender register check, and abuse and neglect towards children. The home study also ensures that a prospective adoptive family is ready and fully capable of raising a child. With financial checks as a part of the home study process, this ensures the adoptive parents are financially stable.

In addition to criminal records and financial stability, prospective families must prove they are healthy – physically, mentally, and emotionally. Hopeful adoptive parents must submit medical records to prove that they are healthy enough to raise a child. Prospective adoptive parents must also be in a healthy state, mentally and emotionally, to bring a child into a safe and loving environment. Considerations such as lingering infertility grief or marital challenges will be evaluated during the adoption process.



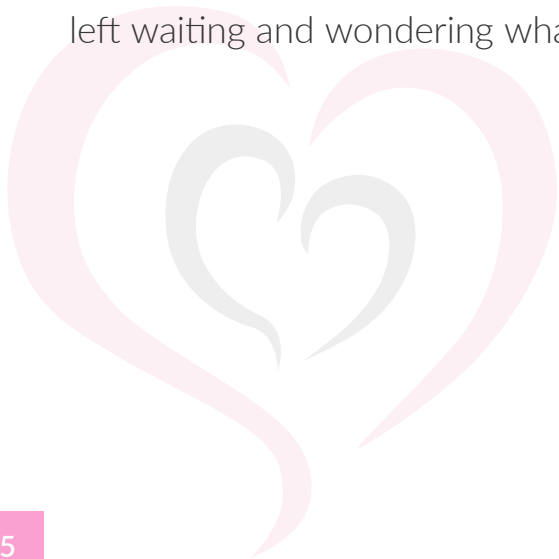
How can I apply to adopt?

Starting the adoption process is exciting, but it can also feel overwhelming. Where do you begin? The first step is to find an experienced adoption agency that you can trust. Adoptions With Love is a private, domestic, non-profit adoption agency that has been placing adoptive families with their children since 1986. We have successfully placed more than 2,500 children with adoption. In fact, Adoptions With Love has placed more babies with adoption than any other private, local adoption agency in Massachusetts.

Our passionate and professional team works tirelessly to ensure that your adoption will go smoothly. From the first meetings where we discuss your hopes, to the final court hearing and beyond, we are with you every step of the way. If you have an open adoption, we can facilitate meetings between birth parents and adoptive families, and make sure the arrangement is working for everyone involved.

Once you have found your adoption agency, you will need to reach out to receive an information package. After that, you may call to set up a consultation with a social worker. At Adoptions With Love, these consultations are free of charge. When you are ready, you may complete your application to officially begin the adoption process.

When your application has been received and reviewed, you will be contacted to schedule the first appointment of the home study process. At Adoptions With Love, understand that adoption can be an emotional roller-coaster with lots of ups and downs. To make things a little bit easier, we work with you every step of the way. We can answer any questions you may have throughout the process, so you are not left waiting and wondering what is happening.



How can a family prepare for an adoption home study?



The home study process can take several months to complete. One common misconception about home study is that it simply entails a home visit from an adoption professional. This, however, is only one small aspect of the home study process. The home study involves several visits from an adoption counselor, and interviews with your whole family. It will also involve a several-page-long report that gives your family the go-ahead to adopt.

The completed home study will paint a clear picture of who you are and your readiness to adopt a baby. It will examine the safety and stability of your home, as well as consider the physical, mental, emotional, and financial health of every person inside the adoptive household.

Since you will be giving the adoption agency – and potential expectant/birth mothers – a look at the type of parents you wish to become, you will want to put your best face forward. How can you prepare for this process? First, you will want to start gathering documents that you will need. Some examples of these may include:

- Birth certificates for everyone in your household
- Marriage/divorce certificates (as applicable)
- Financial records
- Employment verification on company's letterhead
- Verification of income (could be copies of tax returns from the past three years)
- Proof of health insurance
- Proof of life insurance
- Mortgage or rent information
- Physical exam results

Many of these documents you already have, but some may take time to prepare. It can help if you can gather these ahead of time to get yourself ready for the home study process. *Continued →*

How can a family prepare for an adoption home study? *continued*



Another way to prepare for the home study is by starting conversations now. Most likely, you and your family have already talked about adopting at least a little bit. It can help, however, to be clear on your expectations, hopes, and family goals. Some questions to consider include:

- What kind of relationship do you want to have with your child's birth parents?
- Do you have a gender or age preference?
- Are you willing to adopt a child with special needs?
- How do you feel about transracial adoption?
- What about your past(s) may be difficult to discuss with your social worker?
- What are your goals for the future?
- What does good parenting look like to you? Are you aligned on your parenting views?
- How will you talk about adoption with your child? How will you talk about his or her biological parents?
- How will you financially prepare (or budget) for a child?
- Why are you considering adoption?

These are just a few of the potential questions that your social worker will ask you during the home visit interviews. The better prepared you are for the process, and the more aligned you and your partner are on these answers, will bring you the best outcome.



The Home Study

A home study consists of interviews, background checks, and home visits. This allows us to get to know you, and you to get to know us!

What are the Massachusetts Adoption Laws?



Adoption laws vary by state. Before diving into the adoption process, it is important to have an understanding of what Massachusetts' adoption laws and requirements entail. Please note that new adoption regulations are enacted at different times, so it is best to rely on a professional who is well-versed in the Commonwealth's adoption laws and regulations. Adoptions With Love works with Massachusetts attorneys who specialize in adoption. Their years of experience and daily work with adoption can help you trust in their services.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts states that a person must be 18 years or older to adopt a child. There are no marriage requirements when it comes to adopting, but if you are married, you must file to adopt jointly with your spouse. Massachusetts does not discriminate against LGBTQ families, so all are welcome to adopt.

For private adoption, Massachusetts families are required to work with a non-profit agency that is licensed in the Commonwealth. Families must also successfully complete a home study before adopting a child. Adoptions With Love follows the proper protocol to meet the requirements for the home study process, to ensure that all adoptive families are healthy, safe, and stable enough to raise a child.

It is illegal for anyone other than the state foster care system or a licensed adoption agency to advertise for adoption within Massachusetts. This means you must work with one of the above. Adoptions With Love is a full-service, licensed adoption agency that has been working with families since 1986. We are licensed to oversee an adoption, from the initial interviews to the final court proceedings, to ensure that everything is carried out according to law. There are never any "loose ends" when it comes to the finalization of your adoption in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts law stipulates that birth parents cannot sign the consent to the adoption until four (4) days after the baby's birth. If the birth parents need more time before signing the papers, they can take more time. Once the consent to the adoption is signed it is legally binding and irrevocable. This means that the biological parents must wait four days after delivery, before signing any written consent to the adoption.

How does 'open adoption' work for adoptive families?



Open adoption is, as it sounds, an open relationship between an adoptive and birth family. It can take on many different forms, depending upon the birth parents', the adoptive parents', and the child's needs. Years ago, adoption was always closed, and it was often a struggle for adoptees to learn about their biological families and heritage. These days are long gone. Most adoptions today are open or at least semi-open. So what is an "open adoption" exactly? What will it mean for your upcoming adoption?

Open adoption can mean something different for each family. To put it simply, an open adoption can involve:

- A birth mother selecting the adoptive family
- Communicating directly with the birth parent(s) and meeting them prior to birth
- Maintaining a relationship with the birth mother throughout the child's upbringing

The form and frequency of communication after the child is placed with the adoptive parents, is usually requested by the birth mother. This arrangement must be agreed upon by the adoptive family, as well. Before making an adoption plan, an expectant/birth mother typically expresses her wishes with the adoption agency and the prospective adoptive family.

Adoptions With Love works closely with expectant/birth mothers and adoptive families to make sure both parties are happy with the adoption plan. In Massachusetts, the open adoption plan is a written document and signed by both the birth mother and the adoptive parents. It is entered into court at the time of finalization. Over the years the birth and adoptive parents may choose to renegotiate this contract, taking into account the best interests of the child.

There is a common misconception and fear among prospective adoptive families that "open adoption" and maintained contact with the birth mother means there is a greater risk of the birth mother changing her mind. This is not a reality. Once an adoption is finalized in a court of law, it is final. Open adoption helps a birth mother define a relationship with her child over time – as long as the adoptive parents agree that it is in the child's best interest.

What are the benefits of open adoption?



At Adoptions With Love, all prospective families agree to an open or semi-open adoption plan. This is due to the many benefits of open adoption for children as they grow.

Open adoption allows birth parents to maintain contact with her child, and helps to ease the adoption decision because there's not a forever "goodbye." At the same time, an open adoption relationship provides the child (and his or her family) with countless benefits.

Studies show that open adoption is very positive for children. Of the 90 percent of adoptees that have happy feelings about their adoption, those who are in open arrangements express the highest levels of satisfaction. Children in open adoption arrangements have a better idea of where they came from, what their birth parents look like, and the reason behind their adoption. They are comforted in having access to all this information, which historically, was not available to adoptees. This information (about his or her genealogy, family history, and adoption story) can all contribute to greater confidence and self-esteem in a child.

Open adoptions are also beneficial in the sense that a child has a greater circle of love. Your child will have you, his or her parents, as well as a relationship with his or her birth mom. This translates to more people loving and looking out for your child, and a greater sense of meaning for your child himself.



Open Adoption

Research shows that open adoption arrangements are very positive for the child's development, confidence, and happiness.



How can I discuss adoption openly with my child?



Open and honest discussions with your family about adoption throughout the years will help build trust and confidence in your child. It will help normalize adoption, and help your child understand his or her unique story. By being open about adoption and your child's birth family from the beginning, you can also avoid the "search for answers" later in your child's life.

Adoption experts say that starting the discussions about adoption with a child can – and should – start as early as possible. From the moment your child is in your home you may begin sharing her adoption story with age-appropriate conversations. What do these conversations look like?

In the infant and toddler phases, using the word "adoption" with a positive tone can make a big impact. Your child will hear this word and associate it with good feelings. You can talk about your "beautiful baby who was adopted" during bath time, at bedtime, and even during walks to the park.

When your child is in the preschool stage, more questions may arise. This is often referred to as the "why" phase. Answer these questions simply and lovingly. For example, if your 4-year-old comes home from school and asks, "If I'm adopted, where is my birth mom?" You can say something like, "Your birth mom could not take care of you and wanted you to have the best life, and she knew mommy and daddy were the perfect people to take care of you." Simple and positive answers typically suffice at this age.

As your child grows, you will navigate the conversation as the questions deepen – along with your child's understanding. There are several adoption books that can help you find the best explanations for these age-appropriate discussions.

If, at any time, you need help working through these adoption conversations with your child, you can always reach out to Adoptions With Love. Our experienced and sensitive staff has been working with adoptive families for over 34 years, and we have the experience to handle any questions your child may throw your way.



Conclusion

Adoption is an incredibly rewarding journey. As you begin your adoption process, you may find that you are facing challenges and moments of doubt along the way. Take heart! Your adoption agency can guide you through this experience. Adoptions With Love will answer any questions you may have throughout the adoption process – and for the many years following.

Understanding the costs and the adoption laws in your state ahead of time can be very helpful, but this process is made easier with the help of a reputable agency. Adoptions With Love has been working with birth parents and adoptive families since 1986, and our team of adoption attorneys, social workers, and counselors have the experience to support you along the way. Even if you face a situation wherein the birth mother changes her mind, you can rest assured that your forever child is out there, and your adoption will be realized.

At Adoptions With Love, approved adoptive families typically wait 6-18 months after the home study. It may take a little bit more time than you would like but remember: Good things come to those who wait. You will also learn that your child is absolutely worth the wait!

Your adoption is a special time in your life. Be sure to celebrate it! As you plan, anticipate, and anxiously wait for your child, do not forget to cherish this time. If this is your first child – enjoy the sleep! Most of all, take time to prepare your family for this adventure ahead. Prepare the paperwork, get aligned on your parenting goals, and start conversations with a Massachusetts-licensed adoption agency.

If you have any questions regarding adoption in MA, feel free to reach out to Adoptions With Love. Call us anytime at **(617) 964-4357**, or [contact us online](#) today.



Call (617) 964-4357

Adoptions With Love is a full-service, licensed adoption agency in Massachusetts. We are here to help you grow your family.